

What is claimed is:

1. A method for dispatching work orders and receiving status information concerning such orders via a communications network adapted to communicate short message service ("SMS") messages, the method comprising:

(a) coupling a communication device to a dispatch computer, wherein the communication device is adapted to send and receive messages in a SMS format;

(b) formatting a dispatch order into at least one SMS message; and

10 (c) forwarding the SMS message over the communications network to a selected communication device or a group of communication devices.

2. A method according to claim 1:

(a) in which the selected communication device is provided with a response to the dispatch order;

15 (b) formulating at least a portion of the response into a reply SMS message; and

(c) forwarding from the selected communication device the reply SMS message containing the response to the communication device, wherein the communication device provides at least a portion of the reply SMS message 20 to the dispatch computer for storage or display.

3. A method according to claim 2 in which the response comprises status information describing the status of the dispatch order.

25 4. A method according to claim 1 further comprising programming the dispatch computer to:

(a) allow creation of a new dispatch order;

(b) determine the length of the new dispatch order and, based upon the determined length, formulate the new dispatch order into one SMS message or multiple, related SMS messages;

(c) update a database associated with the dispatch computer that stores each dispatch order and information concerning the status of each dispatch order; and
5 (d) transmit upon command from the dispatch operator the one or multiple SMS message(s).

5. A method according to claim 4 further comprising
10 (a) displaying on the dispatch computer pending dispatch orders; and
(b) updating the database upon the receipt of a reply SMS message from a selected service technician concerning the dispatch order being addressed by the service technician.

6. A method for dispatching orders to service technicians remotely and receiving responsive information from such technicians concerning the orders via at least one wireless network adapted to transmit short messaging service ("SMS") messages to allow communication among a central processor and service technicians without making a wireless telephone call, the method comprising:

(a) providing each service technician with a processor and a transceiver adapted to communicate via SMS messages;
20 (b) periodically causing the central processor to formulate a short message to a selected service technician processor that provides that service technician a dispatch order;
(c) transmitting the message over the wireless network via a short messaging center coupled to a mobile switching center within the wireless network; and
25 (d) receiving the message at the selected service technician's transceiver.

7. A method according to claim 6 further comprising receiving from the selected service technician a response message indicating the status of the order.

8. A method according to claim 7 further comprising receiving and storing response messages from multiple service technicians, in which each response message indicates the status of a dispatch order being fulfilled by the respective service technician.

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9. A method for managing dispatch applications in order to deliver messages from or to each of multiple service technicians deployed over a geographically-dispersed area, the method comprising:

- (a) formulating at a central processor a message to at least one of the service technicians for wireless transmission according to a preselected format;
- (b) transmitting the message to a network element for identifying that message; and
- (c) transferring the message from the network element to a communication device associated with the selected service technician, wherein the communication device is adapted to cause the message to be displayed to the service technician and is capable of forwarding from the service technician a reply message concerning the status of a dispatch order.

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10. A method according to claim 9 in which the preselected format is SMS and the network element is a short messaging center ("SMSC").

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11. A method according to claim 9 in which the preselected format is GPRS and the network element is a base station control determines that the message is a GPRS data transmission and routes the message to a second network element comprising a support node.

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12. A method according to any of claims 9 through 11 in which the central processor receives multiple messages from the service technicians.

13. A method according to claim 12 in which the central processor receives messages and places the received messages into a database comprising various fields describing dispatch orders and their status.

5 14. A method according to claim 12 in which the central processor provides default fields to a dispatch operator for formulating a dispatch work order.

10 15. A method according to claim 14 in which the dispatch work order is formulated into at least one SMS message by the central processor, which thereafter forwards at least one SMS message for delivery to the selected service technician.

15 16. A method according to claim 14 in which the central processor updates the database of dispatch orders to indicate the status of the dispatch orders or to remove the dispatch orders from the database upon command from the dispatch operator.